

**FIRESTORM 2003 – PROVINCIAL REVIEW**  
Public Meetings  
***Cranbrook***  
***Part B***

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GF Now we have Lisa Mose.

Lisa Mose:

We have a little technical difficulty. So I am Lisa Mose. I am the daughter of Sid Mose who is a rancher in the area and what I am going to present is some thoughts from a land owner's perspective and from a rural perspective. When I say rural, I don't mean Victoria's definition of rural, which would be anything outside of Vancouver. I mean rural in that those of us that don't live within the city area.

So this is a picture from the Plumbob(?) fire. It was pretty scary, our ranch was essentially in the middle of the fire. Some pictures from the hayfields and this is the ranch next door to us. That house was saved.

I am going to go through five points that were lessons that we learned. Some thoughts on the evacuation policy; some thoughts on sprinkler systems and the structural fire fighters that came from Ontario; some thoughts on security for homes of the evacuees; some thoughts on disruption of ranching operations and also on follow-up communication and compensation.

I heard this phrase 'Prepare, Stay and Survive' a couple of weeks ago at a presentation in Fernie. There were a number of people that are here that saw that presentation. It was a fellow that came up from Montana and he was speaking about some things that happened in Australia, around evacuation procedures. There, their policy is very different from ours. Their policy is they ask the people to prepare – there are many things that we can do to prepare – they ask them to stay and they ask them, they help them to survive. This for us was absolutely crucial.

With the Plumbob fire you need to know that there were two fires. There was one that started small, and then a second one started, I think it was four days later, that was huge and just got totally out of control. But with the first one, it was absolutely crucial that we were there as landowners to be able to put out spot fires that would jump the fire guard. These are all of our neighbours, many other people from around the area that came and helped. This is at 8:00 at night and we were putting out spot fires. That little fire was nothing. About three seconds before that we happened to be in the area and it had just started to candle. You can see there are trees around it that certainly if it had had time it would have continued to go, and I am certain would have candled.

So thankfully we were in the area with our truck and our many helpers and water available and so we put it out. Also, we found that because the fire fighters had left, this was at 9:00 o'clock at night, we were able to find some water pressure in their hoses also that we could use. So big concerted efforts and we went around – this is at the back of our ranch – and found many spot fires that had got going within about two hours that we could put out.

Now another reason that it is important that people that are in the area, that know the area, are around is because of their knowledge – of the road systems and the water sources. You've got a fire like that coming at you, you'd better know where you are going to fight it and you'd better know where the water is.

So, we had fire fighters from all over the country on our fire. This was a crew from Ontario. One of the head guys on the fire was from New Brunswick and we had fire fighters from Saskatchewan. They had no clue, no idea about the road systems or access or anything. So it was very important that we were there. My father spent many hours touring them around, showing different access points that they weren't aware of.

And a second is for maintaining sprinkler systems. Again I say this is from a perspective of rural land owners. This idea of sprinkler systems might not be applicable in town situations because you don't have the access to the same kind of water that we do, but we did.

This just shows you a system that we set up from our irrigation and it goes all around our house and we also – the next slide shows on top of the roof. I think a couple of earlier presentations were talking about types of homes that we create. Ours of course being a massive log house with shake, a larch shake roof. But there were plenty of things that we could do to protect that home, particularly with the sprinkler systems. And I would not trade my log house or the suggestions of some other building materials that I think are ugly. I wouldn't trade them for a minute – instead I would look for other systems. For other things that can help us protect that home and for us it was the sprinkler systems.

So this – our irrigation was essentially set up, hooked into our tractor which was down into our creek and of course we have got, as ranchers we have got a fairly large water allotment so we were able to maintain a sprinkler system for nearly three weeks and have it going near the key time of the day when the winds were high and the heat was really intense.

Now you saw a slide earlier of some fire fighters from Ontario. They were structural fire fighters, I believe they are called, and they came a couple of days after and set up sprinkler systems on all of our outbuildings. They did a fantastic job and set them up on every single outbuilding that we had – including our outhouse. It was well watered. They did an absolutely fantastic job. They could have been deployed a whole lot earlier, we were quite frustrated sitting at the hotel across the street and seeing the structural fire fighters in the lobby talking with them, twiddling their thumbs saying we are just waiting for someone to deploy us. And it took them quite a long time before they were actually deployed out to our place.

But I think what we learned is that Ontario is the only province that trains structural fire fighters. If I am wrong, please correct me, but my understanding is that they are the only province that does that. And there is a lot we can learn here in B.C. from them and I would hope that B.C. starts training people in this.

Points on security for homes, this security situation has to be immediate. If you are going to evacuate people you have to have a plan in place immediately that security is set up. Security happened to be set up a couple of days later, after my father kicked up a very, very big stink. And it wasn't immediate – that as soon as evacuation order was put in place that RCMP would be set at key access points to make sure that our homes were not broken into. It has to be immediate. The two of them have to go together. And of course for that to happen there has to be better cooperation and communication with the local RCMP.

A thought on disruption of ranching operations – the ranch is our livelihood and when you've got a fire starting at the back of your ranch it is incredibly scary. Now in Kelowna, when you asked the people in Kelowna to evacuate it was scary, granted, but for most of them it was an inconvenience. They had to move somewhere else and sleep somewhere else. But when you ask a rancher to leave – you are not only asking them to sleep somewhere else, you are asking them to leave their livelihood. You are asking them to get out of that area – and you are not only – with the fires in the middle of summer – you are not only asking that rancher to leave for three weeks, you are asking them to leave in the middle of their hay season and that is the most critical time. So for us, if you lose your hay crop, that's about \$20,000. That's money that we don't have to make up. It's not equivalent to being out of your job for three weeks, it's quite different. And that of course this year is a whole bunch of money that is to over winter cattle, but aren't even worth anything. So big problem, big problem.

So with this point I really needed to get across that when you ask a rancher to leave, you are asking something very different of him than you are asking someone in town. You are asking him to leave his livelihood, you are asking him to leave his job.

Follow-up communication and compensation – as I mentioned earlier there were fire fighters from all over Canada that were at our fire and most of the locals were off on another fire somewhere else. So when they came back they were not aware, the Ministry of Forests people that came back, they were not aware of the compensation issues in the local area. So, number one, first of all there needs to be clearly published guidelines and process for compensation. We did not know – it took several phone conversations, most of those being directed in several different ways – to find out how are we going to get compensated for fences that were down. How are we going to get compensated for hay crops that were lost – that was not clearly published –

and it has to be, it has to be clear to everybody; and then with the point of local staff being responsible for the follow-up for compensation.

Our claim got lost and Steve is quite familiar with this one and for months – we had different people coming out and speaking to us but information wasn't passed on to the next person that came into place. One fellow was from Prince George that came and talked and one fellow was from another part of B.C. and then we finally came and spoke to a fellow who was from the Cranbrook area and he didn't know anything about the previous conversations with the other people. And so it was completely lost and he said you know actually we don't even have a claim for you – after many, many site visits – we don't even have a claim for you. So there has to be that clear communication. There has to be that clear transition.

Sweet words(?) and criticisms – and there has been lots of criticisms today, but there certainly were many, many things that were done very well. That first fire I spoke of, there was an incredibly quick response by air and ground. Incredibly quick – and they were able to contain it. They were able to keep it small, and as was spoken of earlier, the air support was critical because it didn't get so big. Now the second fire was different because it actually moved seven to eight kilometers in two hours. It was moving so fast that and just got so big so quick that you couldn't do anything with it. It was pointless. So they did pull most of the air support off of it.

The evacuation assistance and the Provincial Emergency Program and the EOC – do you call it? – did a fantastic job – fantastic in helping us with accommodations, meals any sorts of supplies that we needed. And they also did a fantastic job of organizing. They organized a contact person with the families who were evacuated to report twice a day after some key fire update meetings. That was fantastic too, because it kept us – we knew what was going on in our fire and that was absolutely critical. We knew what was going on with our homes and so you were saying that you guys felt you did a good job. It's always good to hear from somebody else that wasn't part of the organization that you did do a good job. And then lastly, the structural fire fighters from Ontario did an absolutely fantastic job, with only the one criticism – that it should have been done sooner.

And those are some of the lessons that we learned as land owners and hopefully some of those will help

GF That's great. Thank you. Can you stay to answer some questions? Thank you.

Just because we have had a number of presentations on structural fire fighters and the difference between them and the wild fire fighters, I think – are you saying that the wild fire fighters who are forestry fire fighters from Ontario knew how to fight a structural fire in dwellings – is that what you are saying?

LM I have no idea what their system is. All I know is that there were some people who came out to our place that called themselves structural fire fighters and they weren't actually out fighting with hoses, they were fighting with sprinkler systems and putting those up around the place – so I don't know the technical stuff.

GF Okay, well our understanding from all the presentations so far that the structural fire fighters are generally speaking the municipal and volunteer fire departments who are used to fighting fires in buildings and dealing with hoses and sprinklers and so on. Whereas, the wild fire fighters are the Ministry of Forests people who are used to fighting the fires in the forests and the recommendation that has been made that makes a lot of sense is that there should be cross-training. That the people who are used to going out and fighting the fires in the forest, when they come to the interface they have said openly that they don't feel confident to go and start doing what they had to do when they came across a building, whether it was a barn or a dwelling, or a house in the Crawford Estates in Kelowna or whatever. Vice versa, the municipal fire fighters could have been of some help if they had had some training in the interface area where the fire was still in the trees and the underbrush, but was coming and threatening the houses and so on. So it seems to be something that many people are suggesting is a good thing. And the fire fighters themselves, on both sides, would like to be cross-trained so that is something that we are certainly going to look at.

LM Yes, well check out the system in Ontario but as I understand it that's what they have. They have people with their crews, their wild fire crews that are trained in saving structures.

GF Okay, good – the sprinkler system – I couldn't quite pick it up from the photographs but do you have sprinklers built into the roof of your house?

LM Not yet, that is now our plan. We will have. What we were able to do was bring our irrigation system, lay out all of our lines all around the house and then used some of the Forestry's equipment actually to jig up to lines that went up to the top of the house and that's where the water was going.

GF To keep the water sprinkling on to your house.

LM The entire house was covered and all around.

GF Okay, and obviously that worked.

LM Yes.

GF Are there some people in the Cranbrook area that have it built into the roof?

LM I have no idea.

- ?? Yes.
- GF Okay, we have been hearing about that and I was expecting somebody to tell me that.
- LM So with us, we are not able to get insurance way out there, because we are an hour from here and also being the type of home that it is and so that is going to be our insurance system, essentially. Plumbing that in permanently because we were evacuated on five minutes' notice – so it has to be a system where you can set it up very, very quickly and ...
- GF You'd have to have a back-up power system, of course you ...
- LM We don't have power anyway. So we have a generator system.
- GF If they are in an urban setting, they need to have a back-up power system because usually what happens is that the transmission lines, or the power lines go down and all of a sudden whatever you had planned on doesn't happen. The water doesn't get pumped up there.
- LM Now certainly in an urban situation that might not be practical because it does take a fair amount of water. But thankfully for those of us in a rural situation, particularly in a ranching situation, we have that kind of access to water and we do have the irrigation potential there. We have all the pipes and stuff.
- GF Thank you very much, Lisa.

GF Our next presenter is Ray Warden. I apologize that we are running behind, but I am sure you are as interested in all of these presentations as I am so thank you, and we are not putting time limits on anybody.

Would you like us to come down there to watch it as well?

Ray Warden:

Yes, thanks.

I don't this is going to quite take fifteen minutes that was allotted for our presentation here. While we wait for the slide to come up, I would like to start off by welcoming you to the traditional territory of Ktunaxa people. In this presentation I would like to talk a bit about the Ktunaxa nation, our involvement in the 2003 fire season, to talk about our interests related to the topics of prevention planning and response to wild fires, and I will do so in a context of our Aboriginal rights and title and also our perspectives on the importance of traditional use information and archeology in effective fire control. I will also talk about our concerns and interests in the management of cultural resources.

This slide show might not happen – for some reason – ...  
( tape #8)

... response also. So maybe I'll just have to read here for a while. So anyway, I would like to talk about what I see are the potential challenges and solutions. I will try to cover most of these points in fifteen minutes and I also want for everybody to keep in mind that this was a tense emergency situation in 2003. People and events had to move quickly and public safety is key. There are some 'should do's' which include a duly consultant consider other interests also. One of them being archeology sites, there are thousands of them in the territory of the Ktunaxa people and they exceed ten thousand years, based on scientific testing. These sites are virtually invisible but they are nonetheless very fragile and important. While B.C., the province of British Columbia has enacted legislation that is designed to protect these values under the heritage conservation act, many sites in the past have been either damaged or destroyed by the creation of fire guards, roads, and other physical disturbances created during fire control.

The impacts of fire guards – fire guards were in some instances constructed in sensitive terrain and disrupted ground water flows, surface water flows and riparian habitat; in addition to archeology sites. So in the future, fire management is going to have to be built into forest management including a variety of strategies from identifying areas to allow them to burn, or having guards already in place; to selecting different types of logging and reforestation in key interface areas.

And we have some wonderful pictures here. This is just my introductory page. Just to let you know, I guess I should introduce myself as Ray Warden, I am the Lands and Resource Coordinator for the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Treaty Council, our lands and resource agency. There is again – you see the font on the very top changed on this computer but that's the name of our agency.

So again I will just go over what I want to talk about today – about the Nation, our involvement in this year’s fire season; our rights, but also with our rights are responsibilities, challenges and solutions and I want to talk a little bit about the terms of reference of the firestorm team.

Here’s a bit of a map showing our traditional territory extending into Alberta, Montana, Idaho, Washington and of course in British Columbia. The dark area is the area in the Statement of Intent for the purpose of treaty negotiations. We are in stage four of the Treat Process, the Agreement in Principle. You see Cranbrook in the lower right section there. We have five communities within the Ktunaxa Nation, going north to Columbia Lake, Shuswap and west to the Creston area.

In the Lands and Resource Agency our mandate given to us by our people is to ensure that lands and resources within the territory are effectively managed and affected for the benefit of the citizens, communities and government of the Nation. Our mission there fore is the agency that I work for works cooperatively with the citizens of the communities and government of the Ktunaxa Nation and other groups that provide quality service that ensure the high standards of care are provided for the lands and resources within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation. Grounded in our culture, traditional knowledge and the best available sciences, these services address the diverse evolving needs of our nation.

That’s just an organizational chart of where I work within. If you look at the agency, I work in Land Protection and Management. In the middle there is our information management program and to the right is our research and planning program unit and that’s where we have a person on retainer as an archeologist.

In the context of working together, our interests are to work cooperatively with our neighbours and government agencies. For example in the past we have collaborated with the former Invermere Forest District in creating a field guide to protect archeological sites during wild fire events. This training program for fire crews and managers unfortunately wasn’t offered this year. I have a brochure that we have made in the past to train Ministry employees on the protection of archeology sites. For you information, the Invermere Forest District has amalgamated into the Kramick(?) Forest District, which is now the Rocky Mountain Forest District – so the Invermere Forest District is really no longer existing.

I think our key challenge is defining how our tribal and neighbouring governments will work together in the future. Another challenge will be to find a better balance between the protection of trees, people and property, also with the protection of cultural, ecological and other resources.

Let's see here – experiences we have had this season. We have had a variety of experiences during the 2003 fire season with the sharing of culturally sensitive information with fire managers. Some agencies such as the Fire Commissioner's office were very professional and diligent in protecting confidential cultural data. But other agencies shared archeology data with third parties, possibly during the heat and press of the battle, but nonetheless eroded our confidence in our relationship and our willingness to share information in the future. So what that means is we do have extensive archeological potential mapping that we hold within our Research and Planning Program Unit that we share with other governments. But, during the fire season that information was passed out to rehab contractors and so forth, breaching the copyright that we had with agencies and that could possibly lead to looting and vandalism of archeology sites.

Just for the next fire season, some pre-fire thoughts and recommendations – it would be probably much better to – I guess I should just let you know that we have a Nation-owned archeology entity that is the preferred choice to do archeology work within Ktunaxa territory. It would be best that a blanket permit be made available for this entity to do the archeology work during the 2004 fire season.

Another aspect is to ensure that fire crews receive adequate training in protecting archeological and cultural significant sites during the wild fire events. For example, the brochure that I have shown here is a good way of training on the ground crews. During the 2003 fire season a lot of – even though the Protection Branch had access to the archeological potential mapping areas in the archeology sites, a lot of sites were plowed through during the construction of fire guards, which could have been prevented.

The second bullet there, the during fire, thoughts and recommendations – what happened this year is we became more involved with the fire control working groups during the latter part of the season. Perhaps for the future maybe a protocol identifying how our government and agencies will work with other government and agencies may be more adequate.

Now just to let you know that currently as we are in a treaty process, we are negotiating a framework for cultural resource management. Maybe we need to expand this to include all related agencies, especially in regard to information sharing and confidentiality protocols.

Once we began working with Ministries in regard to this year's fire season, our Nation own entity – being named Eagle Vision – we had a bit of a problem scheduling in other work to deal with post fire, I guess, activities.

To talk about the post-fire thoughts and recommendations – this year we participated with the working groups – for example Lamb Creek working – or the Plumbob fire working group. These groups help in determining

prescriptions for post-fire rehabilitation, salvage and other activities. We have an interest in being involved in these discussions too, which include our future generations will have access to culturally important plants through the selection of Native Plants B.C. for reclamation as opposed to Exotics B.C. which seem to be more economically attractive to re-seed. I guess with more and more fire seasons coming in the future and during the reclamation and rehab if a lot of the areas are reclaimed by exotic grasses and shrubs, crested wheat grass and stuff, that's alienating us from our access to cultural plants and so forth. So we always advocate the use of native grass seeds and shrubs during the reclamation part and rehab.

Also, these working groups we feel are an effective approach to sharing information and we want to continue to build relationships with this inter-provincial inter-agency type group, but we have a challenge with us that remains the same. This takes no consideration of how we are going to be resourced to participate in such a group.

I would also like to point out that the Ministry of Forests and Tembec's Aboriginal liaisons were very effective with their interaction with the Ktunaxa Nation. But with other ministries it was less effective in some cases with some companies when it came to addressing the way fires were to be dealt with.

Another related key tribal interest is having access to the full range of post-fire economic opportunities, ranging from archeological assessment work, rehabilitation contracts and salvage harvesting opportunities.

I just want to go into some other thoughts here. In a few areas like the Plumbob fire, the fires effectively scoured ingrown forests. In the Lamb Creek site some valuable huckleberry sites were also restored because of the fires. Potentially some of the fire activity will create new habitats that more closely match the prevailing ecological standards of the area, replacing areas of in-growth. Careful consideration will have to be given to the density of conifer restocking as the huckleberry is a keystone species, one that is critical for the survival of other species such as wolves and grizzly bears.

Commercial opportunities – over the past several years we have learned a lot about native plants and their role in the traditional ecosystem that has in some areas been supplanted by the introduction of non-native species. We do have a couple of commercial ventures, including a development corporation and a native plant nursery that will help restore the fire burned areas. We hope to future build our economic development activities using sound ecological principles to contribute to the restoration of the land. And again, industry and governments – they typically plan reclamation and rehabilitation plans on the basis of economy – mostly selecting economic versus native grasses. Other variables such as sediment sources and noxious weeds were not fully considered in the planning and action equations.

I am just about wrapping up this presentation, but in regard to the terms of reference, several of our communities do have volunteer fire departments and some contingency and emergency planning is in place from the 2003 fire season. But, given the fact that the federal government still retains a lot of jurisdiction and control over our resources and priorities for setting the agenda of the work we undertake on a day to day basis, we have serious problems with human and economic capacity to deal with the additional burden and responsibility of the planning, involvement and fighting fires, but we are interested in participating on all these levels.

So I think that is pretty well it. I would just like to wrap up by saying that any future plans such as fuel reduction management strategies, we will require additional resources at a federal level when it comes to Indian Reserves. Our concerns with damage of cultural heritage sites can be addressed by a provincial-active strategy that reduces fuel to eliminate the need to blade in those areas during fire emergencies. Reintroduction of traditional practice of landscape burning for reduction of fuels in an historic system form and a functional landscape level can be proactive approaches, too.

We will provide a more detailed written response here along with this.

- GF Thank you very much Ray for giving us the First Nationals perspective on the issues that were faced in the fires locally. What do you see as being the best way to handle the information sharing that gave rise to your concerns about confidentiality – if there was a desire to do some restoration where they had done fire lines and other things to disrupt the natural landscape and they were attempting to restore it, I assume that you gave them the information of the archeological site so that they could avoid any destruction to them, is that right?
- RW Yes, they did have access to the archeology mapping. Although like I said, being an emergency situation and people had to move quickly, I guess it really wasn't taken into consideration at the time. My recommendations from that are perhaps we can have an Aboriginal liaison working with the fire response command centre, or whatever you call it, ensuring that cultural and heritage sites are protected during the planning of fire guards and so on.
- GF So you are willing to share that information, but you want it under controlled circumstances, is that right?
- RW Yes, we do share information with other governments such as the Ministry of Forests and industry to that extent with a copyright clause. And like I said the Protection Branch I believe had access to the information. If they used it as a tool I am not quite sure, it doesn't – I guess not, but the contractors, the rehab contractors were being given this information probably whereas government unknowingly realized there was a copyright clause in place – an

information sharing type of confidentiality clause. So I guess there needs to be clarity and articulation on the handling of this information.

GF What is the reaction of the Forestry Branch or the Agriculture Department with respect to using native plants in the restoration of the area as opposed to their perhaps preferred plants that they often use to restore.

RW There is a concern over cost. Native grass seed may cost two, three, maybe even more times as much as agronomic types of seeds. What was the result of this year is the working groups felt that we would be accommodating – we as the Ktunaxa would be accommodated by having native plant seeds established in mapped archeology polygons. But what we were trying to emphasize is that we want to ensure that there is con activity between native grass seeds and a given landscape as opposed to just saying okay, well we'll just put it in an archeology polygon. That's not what we were asking for – we were asking to ensure that native grass seeds do have an existence in the future and given landscape. We weren't asking for 100% native grass seed, but to be incorporated into the mix.

GF All of the information that is put forward is on the record and will form an appendix to my report so that those who need to will be reading the presentations and the information that you have given. I thank you very much for that.

RW Thank you.

GF Now we have Michael Keefer.

Michael Keefer:

Good afternoon everybody. I also work with Ray Warden in the position of the Research and Planning Department. My field of expertise is Ethno botany which is the study of how people relate to plants and so I feel this perspective has something good to offer in terms of the fire season and what happens. This photograph – this was I think the summer of 1998 – this happened down on St. Mary's Reserve, this fire that was said that it was very destructive and all of that by some people. But when I went down to this site, while there was still burning stumps, this very day we could see – this was about two days afterwards, you could see the choke cherry plants already re-sprouting. And so the point of that is that fire doesn't necessarily destroy. From my perspective in many cases it actually enhances the values.

But I am also a property owner just to the west side of Cranbrook, the Silver Springs neighbourhood. So this summer we were on one-hour notice. Rather a scary time for many people, very interesting too in another way to see how it brought people together and took other people apart.

This stump here is a Western Larch stump that is on my property. It is roughly 40 cm in diameter. Each of those lines you can see going up and down it, that is a fire scar, and by my count this tree has between ten and thirteen fire scars on it. So that tells me something about the neighbourhood that I live in. It's believed that these kinds of fires were not natural, so to speak, that they would have quite likely been from the Ktunaxa Nation in an attempt to keep the land open, to bring in wild life, to improve the berries. So it is a very good reminder about what kind of a place I live in.

This I don't need to go into too much after all the other presentations, but these kinds of forest have very low values on the land. As you can see, there is no wood being produced for our forest industry and the plant in the foreground with the bright green leaves, bottom left that is Balsam Root – that used to be one of the most critical food plants for the Ktunaxa. It is also very critical early spring food for the deer. The seeds provide important food for the birds and this plant is in decline along with a lot of the other species. So it's a great concern of ours to see these plants disappearing and when we know fires are coming, well that's not that scary because for example the Balsam Roots extend upwards of four feet into the ground so it is simply not damaged by fire.

This is on my little property and when I purchased it back in 1997 there was roughly 10 to 15,000 tree stems per hectare. It was so thick you could not walk through it, you could not see through it. And so what I have done is started to annihilate conifers – as a budding environmentalist from the city when I came here it kind of went against my grain to kill trees as being good for the environment. But my perspective has changed greatly over time and these trees also provide heat for my house. So it is an important thing to

consider with these ecological restoration projects is global warming. Where do we get our fuel for heating our homes? These forests will either burn in a wildfire or we can burn them in a controlled environment and heat our homes and not increase the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

This is just a close-up shot of Idaho fescue that is one of the important grasses in the region, it is a bunch grass, resistant to fire, and it was basically invisible on this property when I purchased it.

Another shot, it doesn't come across very well this, but three years before this photo was taken I had wiped out the trees for the most part and there was absolutely no plant cover visible on the ground. So at this stage we are still only about thirty percent plant cover, but it is a much better picture. Right now in the neighbourhood the snow pack ranges from 2 cm to about 40 cm. Where there has been thinning, the snow pack is around 40 cm, where there hasn't been any thinning there is basically no snow. So this is very significant for our ground water and the snow pack also lasts longer. If you were to clear cut these sites you would rapidly get re-growth of conifers and the fire hazard would go from very low right at the point of logging to very high in fifteen short years. Whereas by taking more of a selective approach, you are not going to get the same regeneration of conifers.

In this photo here, this is up in the middle fork of the White River. It speaks to the archeological values as well as water. What you can see there, going from the bottom left to the top right there is a white streak that is a creek that formed as a result of the salvage logging operations. It was from the skid roads channeling water down and that's all silt we see there. There is hardly any water there, it is basically silt and at the top portion going across that is a side channel of the White River and that is getting filled with silt. It is a critical fish-bearing stream ...

(tape #9)

... as Ray mentioned a keystone species to wild life it is also one of the most important plants for folk who like picking wild berries. A lot of us in the Kootenays value this as one of the top environmental values. In August people go out as a family activity and the Huckleberry is in decline. The reasons being – well for one silva culture, there is an aggressive approach to get trees back onto the land as fast as possible and reach a free-growing state for the legal obligations so then you are not responsible, and there has also been a change in the last ten for a lack of burning following logging. It was believe by many that it was a bad practice, well in the case of this plant fire is good. And so what we have proposed in the Lamb Creek Watershed that is known as being the best area in the region for reliable Huckleberries is that certain areas have reduced conifer stocking requirements.

Instead of planting back 1500 plus trees per hectare we are suggesting that in certain areas no trees be replanted – leave it to nature. In other areas we might not even want to let trees grow back and there are a number of reasons

for this. First of all, the obvious, the bears need the berries otherwise they move into towns and get shot. There is also the idea of creating a matrix in the forest where we don't have these – after the fires of this magnitude – a giant new forest all the same age where it will again be equally susceptible to large fire.

By creating these kinds of breaks with Huckleberries in the best parts we have the opportunity to have long term fire guards. So that is a really key point. But this demand has never been made before, at least in terms of berries. We see it in the valley bottoms in terms of the hunting values. Well, but here we would like to see this done, but then recognizing this is new we have to also do it in the context of research. We have to learn from our experiments and that same applies with the native grasses with what Ray was speaking to. Not only should we try something different, we have to monitor it and learn from it.

There are a lot of wonderful lessons that can be learned from this summer. Employment opportunities, benefits to nature and so I am going to cut it off at that just because I know of our timing and let you ask some questions.

GF Thank you very much, Michael. The comments about forest management practices and the use of fire as a tool of regeneration are ones that are striking a resonant chord. I think I said earlier that it seems as though there is a growing consensus and First Nations People are certainly pointing out to the knowledge of tens of thousands of years of history that it was always a natural tool for regeneration. I think like yourself environmentalists are accepting it now and certainly people who have had the experience of seeing the other side of the coin, how the intervention of humans has changed the way in which our forests are growing today, to the detriment of our forests. Those are all resonant issues that keep coming back at our presentations throughout the province and also taking account of different values and introducing them into the equation when decisions are being made. The different plant covers, the need for biodiversity, and the experiment that you are proposing is an interesting one because obviously in the aftermath of all of this destruction things will either happen naturally or things will be done by virtue of decisions made by departments of government and people who have responsibility for managing land. So we have an opportunity to evaluate those things on a long term basis if we try some of these new approaches or these different approaches – they are probably not new, they are probably ones that were there well before this area was inhabited. So those are all interesting proposals and I thank you for the presentation.

GF Now we have Bill Swan.

Bill Swan:

Thank you and thanks for coming to Cranbrook. I am aware of the time pressure as well, as is my babysitter, so I will try and be quick with this. I know some of this content has been reviewed a number of times today and I am sorry I couldn't be here earlier to eliminate those parts that may be duplicated.

I have a win/win story here in terms of ecosystem restoration and fuel reduction. I run a copy called Osprey Communications and over the last seven years I have been the coordinator of a program called Big Horn in our Back Yard. And it is a project focused in the Radium Hot Springs area of British Columbia. I am pleased to hear you are an old time Radium visitor.

Some of these I will move through very quickly because I know you have touched on some of these points before. The project is primarily an education research project that moves conservation planning to conservation action on the land. I will say from the outset that when we started this seven years ago the idea of doing ecosystem restoration and burning was a hard sell and, with all due respect to the people who have been affected by fires this summer, I feel we have been handed a very good opportunity, a warning shot over the bow to make it much easier to achieve some of these winnable situations on the landscape today.

The project has four key objective areas and a big one has been community outreach and awareness building and we really focused on this for the first three years of the effort. Because, again, the idea of thinning and burning near towns was not going to be well accepted, we had to put a lot of time into that and we also had a very extensive community involvement element to the program – twenty volunteers a year counting big horn sheep, restoring ecosystems, planting grass are some of the things you have heard today. This is the one here, though, that particularly touches on what we are here to talk about this evening. And that is we have an ecosystem assessment research and restoration priority in the project. We are also cognizant of the economic connections between people, communities and ecosystems and we try and keep that present in the program. ]

This is the project area. Radium Hot Springs is in the centre of the screen with the arrow. The red area is the historic winter range of the Radium Stoddard Big Horne herd and they would have ranged through that area up until about the 1950s and '60s when forest in-growth radically began to change there. Today the extent of these sheep is largely in the yellow zone, in and around human affected landscapes in the Radium Hot Springs area. So they have really shrunk back in size, habitat use and in number of the herd as well. The two white polygons you see on the map are restoration areas that we have initiated since 2001 and there is a third one now immediately adjacent to the

town of Radium Hot Springs, just to the west of the upper polygon. That totals about 300 hectares now.

So I mention the outreach emphasis, the program is very much ecosystem focused and emphasizes the many parties involved through open houses, presentations and events we have now contacted directly 2500 plus people. This has drawn the attention of a lot of media and most recently we are recognized in the National Discovery Centre which is opening in Hamilton this coming year as one of four projects from across Canada for its innovation and involvement of folks, everyday folks in ecological restoration and stewardship. Our emphasis has been on the biology and ecology of big horn sheep, the factors affecting them, moving to regional ecosystem issues and emphasizing the multi-stakeholder involvement.

These are the two drivers affecting big horn sheep and their associated species in open forests and grasslands, the in-growth of coniferous forests and direct habitat loss and fragmentation by human activity. But it goes beyond sheep. We have used sheep as an ambassador species to talk about a wide range of things and we have gone from largely a reluctant audience to deal with thinning and burning to one where town council fully supports it. They have now incorporated it in the official community planning process of Radium Hot Springs and we are involved in that inventory process that sought to identify those opportunities on the landscape where you could protect key habitats and also restore them and thereby also gain human safety in and around the community.

So again multi-species approach is very important, ecosystem research and restoration is a big part of the program. Most people will be familiar with the mechanical thinning processes that increase light and forest production, but we weren't advocating this alone. We are a multi-stakeholder organization made up of a number of governments; non-government, municipal, First Nations and hunting associations and as well industry has been involved. So it is a group effort.

Those groups are primarily involved in the planning, this is a restoration proposal area from Radium south to the Stoddart Creek area and the red polygons are all areas that we have conducted stem density thinning from 1300 stems a hectare on average down to as little as 30, with an average of 75 stems. A very different fire regime could potentially move through there now and it met with very little resistance, in fact encouragement from both Town Council and the Village of Radium Hot Springs residents. And we used fire history stand reconstruction science behind us as well. Michael mentioned the fire scarring. The big larch on the bottom is 400 years old and shows a regular repeating of fire through the trench. A man named Gleason took the photograph in 1906; I took it again in 1994 and you can see the relative rate of forest in-growth.

So we know the science, we know the history of fire regimes in the trench, we know that it was more frequent than we see today and this is an outreach program that I have been doing now for three years through The Big Horn in Our Back Yard. And while it may be a very well-known phenomenon in this room and in technical audiences about fire regime and fire structure, the everyday folks don't really know about this stuff. I really would like to see an extensive investment in and understanding of all the factors involved in fire maintained ecosystems; social, economic and ecological.

You have heard this story many times today I am sure. On average 3,000 hectares are converted annually in the Rocky Mountain Trench from the open forest and grassland ecosystems structures in the upper photo to the virtually useless forest in-growth structure to the right.

So that's why Big Horn in our Back Yard has been part of and an entry way for many residents in the Radium area to the larger regional fire maintained ecosystem restoration in the trench. We take people through the whole process. There is going to be some logging beside your town, beside your land, it's for a very good outcome so there is a mechanical pass, some of that goes to the mill and generates jobs. Some of it is burned on-site if it is low value.

We have also as I mentioned, cognizant of the economic connections in all of this and we believe that healthy ecosystems equal healthy economies. We have seen as a result of the project an increased awareness of the opportunities economically associated with healthy ecosystems and viewable wild life for one.

Our keys to success then and I think this model is transferable to a larger application of ecosystem restoration is to build relationships, sometimes one at a time, through open houses, field tours, community involvement and with community groups. This is a time-intensive situation and has certainly been aided by the past summer, but one that can't be skipped in our view.

Partnerships are key, look for common goals to save money. Dovetail with existing programs and be flexible and creative.

Leadership – be willing to take risks. In the case of The Big Horn in our Back Yard project, Parks Canada, Radium Hot Springs and others in the working group were willing to take risks to get some of this stuff on the ground to demonstrate that it could be done.

Be fair and honest in your assessment of costs and benefits and a success is shared by all who have been involved. Showcase them and use them to maintain momentum and attract the attention of others.

Now the challenge ahead for us is that we have been putting some very good demonstration projects on the ground on Crown land because it is easier to

operate on. About fifty percent of this winter range for example is privately owned and I think there are some great opportunities in the future to work with private land owners in the trench to achieve some of the objectives, economically, ecologically, and socially.

I have some funding this year that the Vancouver Foundation has given us to approach this question on private land but it comes with caveats in that we must secure conservation covenants with private landowners to be able to do the restoration. So we are launching a private landowner involvement program this winter to restore and enhance grassland and open forest ecosystems on private lands in the project area. We want to support and encourage private landowners to undertake ecosystem restoration and I have mentioned we have some funding support.

So I think after this winter we will have a greater understanding, in our program at least, of how those relationships with private landowners could be negotiated and involved for a win/win for those involved. But, off the top I can see that there has been – I wrote several funding proposals to try and secure these dollars and no one was interested in spending public dollars on private land and I think we have to get past that and find a way to make investments in the private landscape as well.

So my recommendations would be to enhance outreach to the people in East Kootenay and British Columbia about the costs and benefits of fuel reduction. A comprehensive three-legged stool approach in that there are social benefits, we gain safety from fuel reduction in the interface areas. There are ecological benefits to species in ecosystems. There are economic benefits obviously in food and fibre – fibre from rejuvenated ecosystems. I would like to see support – support the capacity of private land owners to take action, funding to conduct fuel reduction. And the idea of a regional assessment team made of registered professional foresters and registered professional biologists who are fully trained in writing these kinds of restoration prescriptions. If these people were available to private landowners I think it would make it much more palatable to the private land owner.

I have really been frustrated over the last several years in trying to do some of this work with the lack of coordination between municipal and regional growth strategies and I think we have got to get these mechanisms marching in the same line. We've got to start thinking on a landscape level. Particularly missing in some of the assessment work at the municipal level has been risk abatement of management and understanding of the need for ecological inventory and thinking at a landscape level, not just up to the borders of town.

I think I would encourage a broadening of everyone's perspective to recognize the interface and field challenges as part of a much larger forest health issue in British Columbia and Western North America and that it is a very complex interplay of social, ecological and economic factors that require diverse

solutions. It's not just a matter of going out and creating breaks between our towns and the larger landscape.

And finally, please deploy the leadership, interface and ecosystem restoration action in the East Kootenay leads the province and probably the country in technical applications and overall hectares addressed. We have the technical knowledge of the issue and we have a growing list of successful on the ground examples. I believe what we need to do is broaden and enable the successful program in East Kootenay and British Columbia through leadership and financial support.

In closing, I always like to recognize those who have been involved in the Big Horn in our Back Yard project over the last seven years. Without them we could not have achieved what we have. Sorry for the small print, there is getting to be so many of them we have to squeeze them onto fewer and fewer slides.

I thank you for your time and attention.

GF Thank you very much, Bill, it's a very interesting presentation and I congratulate you and the wide network of people that you've got involved. It seems to me that is key to being able to ultimately change attitudes and disseminate information and educate people is getting to be a broad, broad network to be a part of that whole process. You know, you said, I think made the statement at some point that everyday folks just don't understand the issues to do with the whole issue of forest management practices, prescribed burnings and thinning and all the reasons why these things should be done. Certainly that is the impression I am gaining throughout the discussions is that there are many, many agencies and department of government that have long been aware of what are the preferred practices but have not been able to apply them because of a resistance for a whole variety of reasons. They have been looking for this opportunity to get an awareness level raised and it's a terrible thing that takes tragic circumstances and tremendous destruction – it's like the old joke of hitting somebody between the eyes with a 2x4 to get their attention. That's not the way you want to do it, but in this case this may be a once in a lifetime opportunity for people to become aware of the tragic circumstances of not following the best practices that are time tested. They are long proven over generations and centuries and so I think it is important that people and organizations such as yours get together and really give this thing wings and put some lift behind it. Because I think – my own experience is dealing with floods in Manitoba – that three years after a big flood people start to forget how bad it was and the tremendous destruction and they start to become complacent and they start moving back into the flood plain and building houses in harm's way and all those kinds of things. So you have almost a once in a generation opportunity here that I think is going to need to get as much attention as possible so that attitudes and awareness are changed. So I wish you well in that. I just say that we passed conservation

easement legislation in Manitoba for the very purpose of restoring wetland habitat for migratory birds in 1989 which was the last year of a dry cycle. All the 90s were a wet cycle in our province and probably in most of Canada which led us to a whole series of flood problems throughout that decade. But in 1989 when we had the worst forest fires in our history, those are the driest conditions – we had just a march of years that led to that. But Grant(?) as you may know is the Coach of the Minnesota Kings and former coach of the Blue Bombers, is a tremendous outdoorsman and we used him actually in a tourist campaign in the U.S. states near Manitoba and he came and looked at the province. He is a real avid hunter and he said he had never seen the populations of ducks and geese as low in the thirty years that he had been hunting in that area. We went into partnership with Ducks Unlimited and ended up multiplying the money through contributions from various U.S. sources including U.S. Wild Life Associations and the American government. There is about \$60M a year gets put into wetland habitat restoration in Manitoba now and they have done things that include getting private landowners to give up a certain of land around the pot holes, because much of the province is pot hole country and that is usually difficult for them to farm, and usually they don't get much out of it. So easements were taken on the titles to their land to allow for the wetland habitat restoration to take place. It's not a bad thing and going for easements is the proper organized way so that you then have access and entitlement to going on that land and doing the things that you want to do for your purposes. So I certainly endorse it as a way of getting at some of the challenges that you will have for getting onto private lands.

BS I guess I raised it in a context that I am just concerned that if we can only do it through easements it will move too slow and all our efforts on Crown lands may be for naught if a fire can move through the private existing overgrown stands anyway. So I was hoping to look past a legal mechanism for maybe a one time shot in the arm to address the private lands.

GF You probably wouldn't have access to this kind of resource, but some of the money that came from these various different sources I talked about actually paid on a per acre basis and also there was a feature there for municipal taxes to be waived on the land as well when they enter into conservation easements. So a lot of things to try and sweeten the pot for the private landowner and you know a variety of different ways you could look at it, but it certainly has a lot of merit it think.

Anyway, thank you very much, I appreciate it.

BS I have some materials I will leave.

GF Great, I would like to see it.

GF Okay we are almost at the last presentation before the dinner break so is Loree Buczek and Lee-Ann Crane here? Did I pronounce that right? (No). Tell me how. Duczek.

Loree Duczek and Lee-Ann Crane.

Good afternoon, I am Lee-Anne Crane. I am the Chief Administrative officer for the Regional District of East Kootenay and this is Loree Duczek and she is our Public Education Coordinator. We are here to talk to you this afternoon, and our apologies if we repeat things that you have already heard this afternoon. We weren't able to be here all day as much as we would like to have been.

We are here to talk from a local government perspective, obviously, and more on the Emergency Planning side and what we experienced, both the good and some things that we feel perhaps could be improved.

The Regional District's response to this summer's fire season started about three years ago when we opted to make emergency planning a priority in our region. We had plans drafted, we organized team, and a very lengthy training process began at that time. On the good news end of things, we really couldn't have asked for a better team. The leadership and cooperation as well the communications within the Emergency Operations Centre was outstanding. And, as the EOC expanded so too did the spirit of cooperation that was experienced. At our peak we had thirty-five different agencies represented in the centre – everyone working together toward one common goal.

We certainly learned the value of having a solid plan, of having trained people and of understanding and following the B.C. Emergency Management Response System's structure. Everyone knew their role and the EOC team was able to provide support without conflict. This was because there was no confusion over who was responsible for what.

In our opinion, however, the office of the Fire Commissioner did not seem to have an understanding of this structure at the beginning of the incident. Although they did get support from the province to help provide organization, unfortunately from what we could see the lack of training and understanding of other's roles did create some confusion and conflict for them. This was doubly unfortunate given the superb cooperation that there was between the EOC, the RCMP and the B.C. Forest Service. Once the OFC became familiar with the structure things definitely started to improve.

The same confusion seemed to emerge at the level of the provincial regional emergency operation centre. We believe that pre-op is supposed to be there to provide support to the local effort, however we did experience times when they were trying to drive the process which we believe is not only contrary to their role, but also to the positive efforts that were being made locally.

One of the directors of pre-op talked about how over two hundred people were rotated through that centre and that this provided an excellent training opportunity for them. However, this was an emergency and we were dealing with people at the pre-op that really didn't know what an EOC was. And cycling

that many people through in a relatively short period of time is not necessarily a good thing. You almost never spoke to the same person twice and there were times when the chaos and confusion led to disorganization in some cases and unfortunately at time inappropriate responses. Ultimately both of these provincial organizations did not fully recognize, understand or support the local effort. And again, this is in our opinion.

On the opposite side of the equation, the cooperation and the professionalism of the RCMP and the B.C. Forest Incident Command Team led by Bob Fanishment(?) and the information officers Shirley Pobren(?) and Tim Neal(?) were exceptional. The Forest Service staff and Bob himself made it a priority to be at our twice daily briefings. Their information team worked hand in hand with our information officer and the pairing led to a highly successful public information campaign. Something that we believe is absolutely key and of vital importance in an emergency like we experienced.

The RCMP had representation in our centre 24 hours a day. They also made communication with our information officer a priority to ensure the messages going out to the public were both accurate and consistent. The RCMP and our centre's planning section worked on several evacuation plans, everything from small to very large scale evacs. In fact the plan that they devised for the evacuation of the City of Cranbrook was well thought out and carefully planned, to the point where we had the B.C. Forest Service staff tell us that after they reviewed the plan they said that it should be used as a template for other areas in the province. And again, we are just pointing this out as one of the good news things that we experienced here.

These kinds of results certainly could not have been possible if there wasn't the cooperation and the communication between all of the parties involved. There were no individuals at the centre, it was one team working toward one goal.

Now coming to some of the things that we think – that we are looking at in the wake of this summer's fires. We at the Regional District, the Regional Board, has decided that we should implement a thorough public education campaign to help the residents and the property owners to understand how they can better prepare and mitigate hazards on their properties. We are going to try to undertake more thorough risk assessment activities, our emergency teams are definitely going to continue to meet ...

*(Tape #10)*

... organizations that were involved for the first time this summer. We are asking that the province also be committed to safeguarding and protecting our community and take responsibility for management of Crown lands more seriously – and I know you have heard that several times today.

Beyond fuel and forest management there needs to be a commitment to risk and vulnerability assessment. The expertise is certainly there at the provincial

level and what they need to do is perhaps bring in local expertise into the fold. The local fire departments, as we learned this summer, have a wealth of knowledge and they can be extremely valuable and they are extremely valuable contributors to processes like this.

Provincial agencies like the office of the Fire Commissioner must have proper training and an understanding of the BCERMS principles and how they fit in as part of a team. Although the OFC was the office of jurisdiction during the state of emergency this summer they could not have organized an emergency response or adequate support mechanism without all of the other players at the table. And this needs to be understood. If they don't understand that everyone has an important role to play, and what those roles are, they can't possibly be part of a team. And responding to emergencies of this nature, as everyone knows, must be a team effort.

To help encourage local involvement what we plan to do is to invite the OFC to have a local representative on our emergency management committee to become a real big part of our training process and of our emergency planning process. We have not had representation from them in the past but we certainly hope to see this change as they need to be involved at the local planning level.

One other thing that we see to be a need is for the province to ensure that emergency management training is maintained. Currently there are several courses but unfortunately they are not offered frequently enough and they are inconsistent. It took us almost three years to train the team that we have and people leave, new people come in and it is very difficult to get them the training that the need. If communities are to offer an effective response there has to be training available to help them and it has to be available in the rural areas of the province as it is just not feasible for us to send, for people to take time out of their lives, to travel across the province to access this training.

There is some training offered locally, but again it is sporadic and it takes a long time to get through all the training that a person needs to effectively manage an emergency.

Volunteers obviously played a key role in this process and we believe that more could be done to support them and keep them involved. The example that I would like to use today has to do with the emergency social services. Because this is a volunteer organization, and because of provincial policy their people would not have been given any financial compensation from the province. This is fine in a short term situation, generally three days – you know people will do that for that amount of time, however some of our evacuees were out of their homes for two weeks and the ESS volunteers were their support system. You heard from one of the ladies that spoke earlier that they were a help. They did a good job. These people were taking time from their jobs, to continue to offer support during this critical time and it is not right that

they were not considered for financial compensation from the province. Essentially they could have lost money to help.

In extraordinary circumstances where the volunteer efforts extend beyond a few days there must be some type of compensation system in place. These volunteers were trained, efficient and knowledgeable. We need to make sure that these people are able to continue on during an emergency. In the end, the regional district did provide financial compensation to the ESS volunteers, however unlike all of the other extraordinary compensation that we paid to the other volunteers during the emergency, what we paid to the ESS volunteers is not recoverable through Provincial Emergency Program. We believe that is an anomaly that needs to be fixed.

There are many lessons to be learned from this summer's experience. You have heard many of them today and I know you have experienced some of your own. The Regional District is definitely committed to doing its part and we hope that this review will lead the province to make it a priority to make the necessary changes to address prevention in our forests, to ensure adequate training opportunities and to recognize and support the important role of local emergency efforts.

From start to finish, Loree Duczek who is here with me acted as a public information officer. We received high praise for the efforts of Loree and her amazing team and it is appropriate for her to speak to you about the lessons that we learned on the information side.

GF Thank you.

Loree Duczek:

As Lee-Ann mentioned, my role during the EOC activation was that of the Director of Public Information and one of my primary responsibilities was to develop a communications plan that would accurately provide information that was timely and as I mentioned accurate to those directly affected, and also to those indirectly affected by this summer's experience.

Our commitment from the outset was to provide the public with as much information as possible. The morning that we opened the EOC, the very first thing that we did was establish an information line. It became a source of up to date accurate information, a personal connection for the community, and ultimately it became a resource for our team as they provided us with valuable feedback throughout the process.

The first day I had one helper and by that evening two, and it grew from there to a staff of fifty-five trained operators that we rotated through on a 24 hour a day basis and in the month that we were open we handled over 5,000 phone calls. It really became a credible link for the community and it also showed me the need that people had to have a voice and to have a credible source of information.

The local media were also a key part of the communications here. They ran hourly radio updates and the local cable station replayed the daily news conferences on a loop and that also became a source of information. People would be turning to the channel to see the latest update and the latest news conference.

And as the situation intensified – I'm sure you have heard some of this today – there were meetings in small communities in the area, we held daily news briefings, there were daily or every other day meetings with evacuees, twice daily updates to the reception centre and to the ESS volunteers. The B.C. Forest Information Offices and I formed a very close working relationship throughout this process and really the community reaped the benefit of this cooperation.

Our information was as timely and as accurate as possible and we were all working toward the same common goal. And, because we were taking some of the pressure off in getting those phone calls, it allowed the information officers to really focus their attention on the important priority work that needed to be done. And, just as we had the 35 agencies working in the EOC, it also alleviated that pressure from the incident command team who had an important job at hand. So cooperation became key and everyone was a winner as a result of it.

In our opinion this relationship was not as successful with many of the information officers who were sent in by the province to assist the office of the

Fire Commissioner, I believe largely due to a lack of emergency information officer training. Information flow in an emergency is quite different from that in a regular communications job for a ministry or for a politician. And this was further complicated by the fact that most of these people were sent in for a four-day rotation. And four days is simply not long enough. In this type of situation if you are coming from out of area to arrive in a situation like this – even to familiarize yourself with the area, the people involved, who is in the EOC, who is out at the incident command – it's just too much to ask of one individual and being rotated in and out on a four-day rotation it made it very difficult.

We strongly encourage the province to consider establishing and training an emergency information team that could be deployed around the province as required. Something similar to what the B.C. Forest Service Protection Branch is using with their I Team now. Deployments should be two weeks to give the information officers time to become familiar with the players involved and also to become better informed about the situation at hand.

Having the information line that I mentioned earlier set up, a good working relationship with the local media and the many different avenues of communication with the public that we explored was a key part of our information flow. It gave the public a sense of reassurance and it also helped provide a credible information source when erroneous or exaggerated stories were run by provincial or national media sources.

We learned quickly that good communication is critical to the success of any operation. Without it you will be unorganized, uninformed, and incapable of making the important decisions and you will lack credibility with partnering agencies and the public. We had outstanding communication at all levels and having trained information officers available at the provincial level would only enhance this response.

Learning from this summer's experience shouldn't just be about what went wrong but also what went right and I am very proud to say that there were a lot of good things that happened here and I hope that some of the good things that happened not only here but in the other parts of the province will also be shared and studied because I think learning from good example is one of the most powerful teachers.

Thank you both for giving us the opportunity to speak today.

GF Thank you very much. I appreciate the time and effort you both put into giving us this report. There are a lot of things that I think make a lot of sense and I think the points that you make early on, Lee-Ann, about having a solid plan, trained people, and all essentially playing off the same game plan is really, really critical to a successful operation. In times of crisis people don't have a lot of time to think about it. There has to be a plan in place and they have to

be able to follow it, and they all have to be playing on the same page. You have countless government agencies and departments and two levels at least of government involved and if you are not all singing from the same song sheet there is absolute chaos. As you have alluded to that some of the things were that way, but most of them weren't thankfully.

We have had comments from other people. One of the things that seems to be part of the equation is that the office of the Fire Commissioner had a lot of retired people who came in just for the time of the fire crisis and perhaps they weren't familiar with Provincial Emergency Program's emergency plans, with BCERMS and all of that and they – I don't know the reasons but we are certainly going to try to get to the bottom of it.

The question of people not quite fitting with the structure is an important one because it is important to know that there is one plan that you are all committed to and that there is one structure and everybody knows their role within the structure. Early on and throughout the meetings we have been getting indications that under some circumstances some people were unsure who was in charge.

The process of declaring a state of emergency is a unique one. Obviously the province did it, the office of the Fire Commissioner becomes essentially the people who are responsible for the direction of the state of emergency. On the other hand they have no way the capability to do it because of a lack of people. There are just a handful of people. I think their entire annual budget is about \$1.5M. Well every fire department in the Kootenays probably has a bigger budget than that. So there is an issue there that has to be looked at and clearly you have identified that.

Looking forward to a public education campaign, I can't think of anything that is going to be more important now about all of the issues that you learned about. The lessons that have been learned, all of the forest management issues that have been debatable in the past are now getting clearer and clearer in people's minds. Updating emergency plans, having in place an updated emergency plan, utilizing training. I think it is difficult to expect that everybody who has, in many cases, got their own jobs or are volunteers is going to go in and take a course in Vancouver. So we are going to have to look at ways in which we can regionalize. If we could get one course put on, on a weekend in the valley here, in the Rocky Mountain Trench, could we get people to come all together in a central spot, that kind of thing. I think that should be part of what we have to be looking at.

The whole issue of public information sounds as though you handled it very well. Obviously we have hit the extremes there are some places in which everybody has been very satisfied with the communications and there are other places in which people think it was absolutely terrible. So I am glad to hear from your perspective that it went well, and setting up your own call

centre and being able to divert a lot of calls away from those people who were on the firing line and had other responsibilities is terrific, absolutely essential and the twice daily updates, the close cooperation, all those kinds of things – emergency information team – I am not making excuses but I suspect the four-day rotation is partly due to collective agreements in some cases – people can't be compelled if it falls outside of their normal work week commitments and those are things too that we have to look at because a lot of this – the combination of volunteer services and full time services at municipal level and provincial employees coming in, all of whom have different – some of them have no collective agreements obviously, the volunteers – but they then end up doing a yeoman service and getting the short end of the stick. So there are lots of issues that have to be looked at there.

But I appreciate hearing all of these things and they are going to be very important advice for us as we come together with all of the issues that have to be covered in our report. So thank you for coming.

LD/LC Thank you for your time.

GF We are going to take a dinner break now and it looks as though we are going to be tight for time so I won't promise you we'll be back at seven but if any of you are here at seven and we are a little bit late, we will be back.

Thank you very much for – so many of you have sat through the entire afternoon. We have half a dozen presentations for the evening lined up, starting at 7:00 o'clock so we will be here as close as we can to seven.

Thanks.